Mr. Speaker, I

rise today in strong support of the Darfur

Peace and Accountability Act. This legislation

is a much needed step towards ending the unprecedented

tragedy taking place in Sudan,

and its consideration today is long overdue.

Over the past 3 years, the world has

watched as the situation in Darfur has escalated

into an unprecedented humanitarian and

human rights crisis. Since February 2003, civilians

in the impoverished Darfur region of

Sudan have been subject to indiscriminate

killings, abductions, torture and rape at the

hands of the Janjaweed—a lawless militia that

has the alleged support of the Sudanese government.

It is clear that the government of

Sudan has offered their tacit approval for

these attacks, and in many instances has engaged

in air and ground strikes to augment

the Janjaweed assaults on the people of

Darfur.

The scope of this ongoing tragedy is hard to

imagine. The numbers, unfortunately, speak

for themselves. An estimated 3.5 million people

are starving and some 2 million have been

displaced from their homes, including hundreds

of thousands who have fled to Chad for

refuge. When then Secretary of State Colin

Powell called the crisis in Darfur ‘‘genocide’’ in

September 2004, an estimated 50,000 people

had been killed. That number may now reach

as high as 400,000 today, with 180,000 of

these deaths occurring in the past 18 months

alone according to the United Nations. These

numbers continue to grow everyday; however

we may never fully appreciate the enormous

human toll these atrocities have taken on

Sudan, the continent of Africa, and the world.

The atrocities taking place are nothing less

than a human tragedy, a world wide cause

that we cannot ignore—and yet the international

community remains essentially paralyzed

and unable to stop it. To date, there

have been 8 rounds of peace talks, the deployment

of 6,000 African Union troops, 6

U.N. Security Council resolutions and declarations

of genocide by the administration and

this Congress. Despite this pressure, the Sudanese

government has steadfastly refused to

take any constructive steps towards ending

this humanitarian crisis.

As the leader of the free world and a role

model for human rights and democracy, we

must live up to our own example. To this end,

the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act takes

several important steps toward increasing

pressure on the government of Sudan to end

the current crisis. Among its many provisions,

this legislation strengthens sanctions on individuals

and governments responsible for, or

connected to, the atrocities in Darfur. It also

provides strong support for the expansion of

humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts in the

region, and calls for the suspension of Sudan’s

membership in the United Nations.

While this legislation alone will not end the

atrocities in Darfur, it will send a strong message

to Sudan and the world community that

the U.S. is serious about bringing an end to

the violence.

Many grassroots groups around the country,

such as the Connecticut Coalition to Save

Darfur, have been working to educate policymakers

and the public on the urgent need for

action in this troubled region of the world.

Their efforts have ensured that the crisis in

Darfur stays in the public mind and today’s

consideration of the Darfur Peace and Accountability

Act is a testament to their tireless

work. I am proud to support this legislation,

and strongly urge its quick approval in conference

so that we can get this important bill

to the President’s desk without delay.